THE ACORN PC-ECOLINK CARD

DETAILS

Product name :EcoLink
Sales order code :AEH30
RRP :£299 ex VAT
Availability :1st week November 1987
Product :1 MS-format disc
1 PC long slot card
1 manual

Ecolink uses the Acorn Econet local area network. It consists of two components:

- The software provided to use the network includes Microsoft's MS-NET redirector designed to provide access to remote devices from MS-DOS, in a manner very similar to normal access to local devices. The 'redirector' and other software supplied translates MS-DOS-type commands and information into the format required by Econet. It can be used with most computers that run under MS-DOS (version 3.1 or later).
- The interface card provides the electrical connection from the workstation to the Econet network cable. It is provided on an IBM PC-compatible (long slot) card, which can be used in almost any computer that has such expansion slots.

HOW DO I KNOW MY MACHINE IS COMPATIBLE WITH ECOLINK?

Your machine should be as follows:

- IBM PC/AT-compatible
- have long slot card capability
- use a standard card edge connector
- use MS-DOS 3.1 or later.

If your machine conforms to these requirements, there should be no problem.

DO I NEED SPECIAL VERSIONS OF PC PROGRAMS FOR THE NET?

No, but consideration must be given to software licence restrictions.

IS THERE ANY LIMIT TO THE NUMBER OF IBM COMPATIBLES YOU CAN HAVE ON A NET?

Only Econet's normal 254-station limitation. Larger machines will create greater Econet traffic. You may wish to split networks into smaller segments using the Econet bridge.

CAN I TREAT THE FILESERVER EXACTLY AS I WOULD AN MS-DOS DISC?

Yes, except for limitations imposed by MS-NET such as the FORMAT, DISKCOPY and JOIN commands.

HOW DO I MOVE FILES FROM NET TO DISC AND VICE VERSA?

This is done using the standard MS-DOS copy commands.

WILL THIRD PARTY SOFTWARE HOUSES PROVIDE SITE LICENCE VERSIONS OF THEIR SOFTWARE?

We expect so, but this is really a question for the software houses.

CAN I LOAD PC FILES INTO BBC MICROCOMPUTERS AND BBC FILES INTO PCS?

When a DOS user creates a file on the file server, as far as the file server (and Econet users) are concerned, it is a normal Econet file. EcoLink does not impose any restriction or partitioning: DOS files can be accessed from Econet and vice versa (with a few limitations). It is up to the users/manager to segregate files, by naming conventions or user directory groupings, if they wish. The contents of a file are read into an Econet or a DOS station in exactly the same way. Differences in utilities may make them appear different. For example, the Econet *TYPE command translates CR to CR-LF, while the DOS TYPE command does not.

DOES THE FILE SERVER HAVE TO BE PARTITIONED LIKE A 512 DISC?

No. The normal file server format is compatible with the MS-NET requirements.

THE CARD WILL NOT WORK IN THE FOLLOWING:

- M19 because this does not have a long slot capability unless you fit an expansion box.
- RMPC2 because this is not an IBM PC-compatible and so does not take standard long slot cards or have a compatible connector system.

DOES THE USE OF ECOLINK RESTRICT MY USE OF THE NETWORK?

The use of EcoLink on a network does not impact in any way on any other machines using the same net.

HOW DO YOU SET A STATION NUMBER?

A 'SET ID' command is provided as part of the package. The station ID is maintained in non-volatile RAM on the EcoLink card.

CAN I USE *VIEW OR *REMOTE, OR IS THERE A SEPARATE SET OF UTILITIES?

No. You cannot implement these commands because there is no interface provided within MS-DOS.

CAN I USE FILES SAVED FROM AN IBM ON A MASTER 512 AND /OR ARCHIMEDES WITH EMULATOR?

Yes. A network software interface for the emulator is also under development.

WILL I HAVE FULL ANFS UTILITIES?

No. A limited set of commands is available to enable use of the network. Network management functions such as COPY and DELETE are provided through MS-DOS.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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The choice of experience.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

CAN I USE OS-TYPE COMMANDS TO MANIPULATE THE NETWORK AT TRANSPORT LEVEL?
A full network transport level is implemented but the documentation is not supplied as part of the package. Under most circumstances, recourse to this level will not be necessary. Users with specific applications that require information about the transport level should apply in writing to Acorn.

IF I HAVE MTECH BBC BASIC '86 CAN I RUN BBC BASIC PROGRAMS CREATED BY A BBC MICROCOMPUTER?
Acorn is not in a position to comment on the compatibility or otherwise, of another manufacturers software. However, EcoLink should not impact upon any existing compatibility.

CAN I SPECIFY THE NET AS A DIRECTORY INSTEAD OF A DRIVE?
No. The MS-DOS JOIN utility does not join to network drives.

DO I USE ATRIB OR ACCESS?
Neither. You use the new command 'XATTR' instead.

CAN I USE THE NETWORK PRINTER, ie POSTSCRIPT WITH A LASERWRITER?
Yes. However, the printer drivers you need depend upon the application.

DOES ECOLINK WORK OVER BRIDGES AND X25 GATEWAYS?
EcoLink works over bridges to allow larger networks to be created. EcoLink does not provide a client interface to the Acorn X25 gateway.

HOW DO YOU USE SOFTWARE TO IDENTIFY AN IBM ON THE NET?
You use a machine-type peak. EcoLink responds with Type 13.

WHAT ERRORS ARE DISPLAYED ON NETMONITOR WHEN PROBLEMS OCCUR?
NETMONITOR displays are unchanged since they deal with the transport level.

CAN I READ A HARD DISC ON ANOTHER IBM OVER THE NET IN THE SAME WAY AS ETHERNET?
No.

WHEN THE MASTER 512 AND ARCHIMEDES EMULATIONS ARE NETWORKED, HOW MUCH COMPATIBILITY WILL THERE BE BETWEEN FILES AND SOFTWARE?
There will be a large amount of inter-compatibility. However, the exact extent will not be known until the various implementations are completed.

CAN I SAVE PROGRAMS TO THE NET OR AM I RESTRICTED TO DATA FILES?
It is possible to save both types of file to the network.

ARE THERE ANY FILE SIZE RESTRICTIONS ON THE NET WHEN USING IBM?
No limits are introduced other than the normal MS-DOS limits.

DOES FILE TRANSFER WORK LIKE A BBC MODEL B (NFS) OR A MASTER (ANFS)?
Data transfers are more in keeping with ANFS, but are dependent on MS-DOS.

CAN AN IBM BE USED AS A PRINTER SERVER OR A FILE SERVER?
No.

DOES ECOLINK WORK WITH ALL LEVELS OF FILE SERVER?
EcoLink works only with the level three file server or with Filestore.

WILL ECOLINK WORK WITH SJ RESEARCH FILE SERVERS?
Yes.

IS ECOLINK A DEALER UPGRADE?
No. You can fit it yourself.

CAN I PLUG AN IBM ONTO BOTH ETHERNET AND ECONET AT THE SAME TIME?
Yes. Drives within MS-NET can be allocated to both systems concurrently.

CAN I USE ECOLINK AS A BRIDGE?
No. There is no software for such an application.

WHERE CAN I GET SUPPORT FOR MS-NET?
There are a number of books about MS-NET. Your dealer/supplier should also be able to assist you. The documentation supplied provides full details for fitting and using the card.

IF I HAVE A PC SPRINGBOARD AND ECOLINK FITTED, CAN I TRANSFER FILES AND PROGRAMS INCLUDING ARM ASSEMBLER ROUTINES, FROM AN ARCHIMEDES TO IBM AND VICE VERSA?
You can transfer the files between the two machines but there are functional differences between the two operating systems which produce differences in the assembler environment.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM ALREADY USING OTHER CARDS IN MY PC?
Details are provided to allow the EcoLink card to be modified to use a variety of addresses or interrupt numbers. It should be possible to ensure that it will work with other cards.

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